

## US Cultural Imperialism

Ah, another set of yelps from the Aussie boys (for whom it is still acceptable discourse to talk about “Japs”), when reminded of their own cultural disempowerment and forced to wake up from the dream of a purely “aesthetic” approach to art.

Lindley wrote:

PS it's always annoyed me the way that critics and commentators function to create a visible avant-garde [sic] in terms of their local perspective. Eg. I've mostly enjoyed reading Scott MacDonald's Critical Cinema series (less so the third edition), but have always found it irritating how US-centred it is, even when he claims to try to adopt a more international profile (which makes the US bias even more irritating, since it's still so prevalent). Please, call it A Critical US Cinema, or LEAVE the US for a serious period (eg. 10 years) and actually experience and learn about what's happening in the rest of world. No one can claim to understand international developments without developing an international consciousness, and abandoning their sentimental national identity with its attendant and unconscious myopia.

Sure, I'll come to Australia and spend a year, say, looking at and writing about all the fine experimental film there--just as soon as you arrange for my salary and all expenses including travel for my spouse, and paid trips back to Chicago to see my elderly mother as often as I want to go, and various perks and amenities which I can detail when we get around to contractual negotiations. I'll even drive around there in a Subaru Outback and shoot large marsupials and roast them over a campfire.

Which is to say, of course there are some good reasons (as well as some blindspot and arrogant ones) for the national centeredness of the discussion of avant-garde film. It's one of the least likely forms of cinema to ever travel. How many US avant-garde film folks have ever seen a Bruce Elder film, and he lives right next door in Canada.

What can we see in the U.S.? Not much. About 15 years ago or so ago, MoMA added some films to its rental collection, but I've never seen them--never wanted to risk renting any without some other information. And Tracey Moffat's [sp?] work has been screened in the US esp. at feminist and multicultural venues, and she did at least one tour here.

So, it seems to me the solution is not to whine about American arrogance (not much you can really do about that, is there?) and for the Aussie Boys to put together a travelling package, get your government or a nonprofit NGO or charity to come up with money for prints and travel, and then send it around to N. American venues. I think most programmers would be delighted to be given the chance to show more international variety. The Germans have done this pretty successfully (at least we know about Von Praunheim and Farocki).

Of course that means actually getting your hands dirty with such details as getting films through customs and facing the realities of institutional base of the avant garde rather than just grandstanding denunciations of “bureaucrats” à la Jost, and absurd beliefs in a “pure aesthetic” that operates without any cultural basis, historical framework, or real living human beings.

If that’s too much why not just put some stuff up on the net as streaming video and let everyone take a look?..well, everyone with access to a pretty sophisticated high powered computer. Oh yeah, and while you’re at it, how about finding some women, queers, and people of color making experimental work to include in the package...if it isn’t asking too much.